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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the International Network of Liberal Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

The activities of the International Network of Liberal Women (INLW) are inspired by the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. INLW uses these principles which are the basis of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The main objectives of INLW are developing the awareness of women concerning their rights and political, economic, social and cultural responsibilities; reinforcing relationships and exchanges among women from all over the world; and promoting the application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Noting:

That the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly are important contributions to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women;

That the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the commitments to gender equality and the advancement of women contained therein were treated in the United Nations summits, conferences and special sessions;

That the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has contributed to reinforcing gender equality and the empowerment of women;

That in some countries, there is an inappropriate distribution of human and economic resources and in some areas, there is a poor comprehension of the political significance of equal opportunities for men and women concerning topics such as the participation of women in democracy and women's human rights, and, consequently, there is a lack of political will and a lack of legal measures to establish efficient implementation;

Therefore:

INLW proposes a review in respect of women in armed conflict:

In zones of armed conflict, all forms of violence committed against the civil population affect particularly women and children, in particular infringing seriously humanitarian international law, especially the provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.

Women, who are the main civilian victims of conflicts and wars, have to be empowered and made part of conflict management, i.e., conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding.

INLW proposes a review in respect of education:

Education for women and girls is essential to escape poverty in developing countries. The majority of illiterate adults in the world are women.

Finance literacy programmes together with practical education for better living, with the participation of women themselves and which take their interests into account.

INLW proposes a review in respect of health:

Insist on gender-appropriate health-care programmes.

Avoid discrimination against women in preventive health care.

Insist on specific health-care programmes for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, in particular.

Change social cultural patterns, especially those affecting women's health (female circumcision and other forms of castration).

INLW proposes a review in respect of violence against women:

Insist on promoting programmes which raise awareness about violence against women.

Take preventive and punitive measures to eradicate all types of exploitation of prostitution, trafficking in women and sex tourism, where children and women are the victims.

INLW proposes a review in respect of the girl child:

Stress the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by countries worldwide, especially for the protection of girls from forced marriages, trafficking, sexual exploitation and lack of identity papers.

INLW proposes a review in respect of the participation of women in decision-making:

Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels.

Ensure that Governments, public administrations, judiciary systems, international and non-governmental organizations, political parties, trade unions and enterprises have to apply and implement the 50/50 gender equality system in internal structures.

Establish indicators to evaluate and promote the implementation of equality policies, in order to have control of this implementation.

Ensure a better conciliation of work and family life.

Conclusion

The added experience brought by women can be a source of hope for the future.

If they are given the opportunity and allowed to act, women are well-placed to meet the challenges that the future will bring us.

Peace, freedom, development and equality are the three major goals that societies should endeavour to achieve in the future.

The culture of peace, which values dialogue, equality and respect of the dignity of all human beings, especially women, is the most effective way towards democracy, tolerance and international peace.

Therefore the whole international community should commit itself to intensifying its contribution to implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and their further outcomes.